



BLM - ALASKA FRONTIERS

News about BLM-managed
public lands in Alaska

ISSUE 82 SUMMER 2001

Resource Advisory Council Tours Colville River

It's one thing to sit in a meeting and hear a presentation about raptor habitat on the Colville River or how ice roads disappear each summer. It's another to stand on the banks of a river and watch peregrine falcons returning to their nests. Or fly over ice road routes on the North Slope and strain to see where the roads existed just a few short months ago.

This is why the 12-member Alaska Resource Advisory Council decided to see the Slope for themselves in early July. And why the things they saw, heard and discussed during the three-day tour will influence the advice and recommendations they provide BLM in the coming months.

"There's no substitute for personal observation," explains council chair Gary 'Gus' Gustafson of BP Exploration. "Presentations during meetings



Craig McCaa

Members of the BLM Resource Advisory Council float past the cliffs of the Colville River on their summer field trip. BLM is launching a detailed land use planning effort for this area as a result of decisions made during the regional NPR-A environmental impact statement completed in 1998.

have their place, but you can't really relate to an area until you've seen it for yourself."

So BLM staff and council members departed Fairbanks for the North Slope July 12. They toured Phillips' Alpine facility and overnights at Nuiqsut. The following day, the group flew over BP's Trailblazer exploration prospect and over ice road routes now partially overgrown with summer vegetation.

But the pinnacle of the tour for most council members was their

day-long trip down the Colville River. BLM resource staff accompanied the group to listen to their concerns and answer questions about the river and its resources which led to its designation as a Special Area by the Secretary of the Interior in 1977. This designation recognizes the area's significant subsistence, habitat, and scenic values which must be afforded maximum protection by law during leasing or other activities.

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RAC tours Colville

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Council members talked with BLM biologist Dave Yokel during the float trip, who identified raptor and passerine (songbird) habitat. The Colville has the largest expanse of passerine habitat on the North Slope, while the area's steep bluffs provide critical nesting sites for raptors. Council members spotted numerous birds and other wildlife. They also encountered two recreationists from Boston taking an extended canoe trip on the Colville.

After a full day on the river, the group made camp and discussed the day's events over a dinner of moose meat spaghetti. Council members talked about major resource values of the river and the conflicts which may arise as BLM prepares a cooperative management plan for the area.

Some members were concerned that complex jurisdictional issues might result in a piecemeal approach to land use planning on the Colville. Others were concerned about visual impacts from potential oil and gas leasing activities. "Even state-of-the-art facilities like Alpine can have significant visual impact on scenically sensitive landscapes,"

suggested council member David van den Berg, who represents conservation interests on the council.

All council members agreed it was in the best interest of both industry and the environment for all activities on the North Slope to leave the smallest footprint possible.

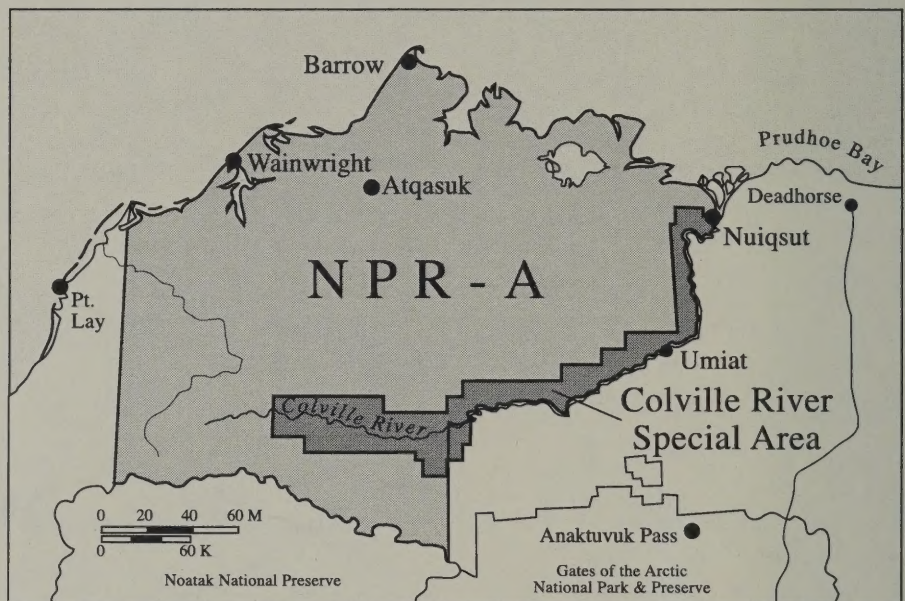
As the group made their journey down river, a rough-legged hawk and peregrine falcon engaged in a territorial dispute overhead. The peregrine noisily escorted the

hawk away from its nesting area in no uncertain terms. Minutes later the hawk gave council members a similar admonition, as if reminding the floaters who was the visitor and who was the resident on this quiet stretch of river.

—Teresa McPherson

For more information about the Resource Advisory Council, log on to www.ak.blm.gov or call 907-271-5555. Look for information about new appointments to the council in the next issue of BLM-Alaska Frontiers.

— editor



Colville River planning underway

BLM is preparing a multiple-use activity plan for the 2.3 million-acre Colville River Special Area. This plan was directed by the 1998 Record of Decision for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) to ensure protection of important surface resources.

The plan will establish guidance, goals, objectives, and policies for resource management in the Colville River Special Area. The planning process will encourage public participation, including input by the Resource Advisory Council.

Specific issues to be addressed include subsistence, wildlife, recreation and paleontological re-

sources of the area. The plan will also address the possible creation of a bird conservation area in cooperation with other area landowners.

BLM Northern Field Office staff will host four scoping meetings from Anchorage to Barrow later this fall. The scoping period will run through early November with specific dates to be announced soon. Written comments may be sent to Gary Foreman, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844. For additional information, call 1-800-437-7021.

Firefighters Repair Historic Cabin

When a Bureau of Land Management work crew arrived at the historic Long Bar Cabin in May, they found spruce and birch trees growing out of the dilapidated sod roof. One part of the roof had collapsed completely, leaving a dirt pile on the kitchen table and a gaping hole to the sky.

The crew of 14 firefighters and a carpenter from the Alaska Fire Service had flown by helicopter to the remote site on the Fortymile River, in east-central Alaska, to attend to the ailing roof and keep the cabin from collapsing.

What made the Long Bar cabin worthy of this special attention was the structure's unique role in the history of the Fortymile region, said Northern Field Office archeologist Robin Mills.

"The cabin's single-room, spruce log design is typical of many other cabins throughout the Fortymile River drainage and Alaska," Mills said. "However, the structure's age makes it unusual."

"In the Fortymile River drainage, we know of only three cabins built during the late-19th or early-20th centuries that remain this intact."

The Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer in Anchorage recently determined the site to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, Mills said.

Colorful Past

For firefighters from the Chena Hotshot Crew, the cabin project provided not only hard work, but a trip to a beautiful place and a fascinating glimpse at the Fortymile's colorful past.

The cabin sits on a forested gravel bar that sweeps around a broad bend in the Fortymile River. Across the river, spruce trees teeter on top of yellow, crumbling cliffs



Craig McCaa

Firefighters went all out to help preserve a piece of the Fortymile mining history.

that drop straight into the swift, tea-colored current.

The firefighters found written on the cabin's doorframe the name of its builder, Joseph Nicholas Brost. A former Milwaukee shoe salesman, Brost came north with the Klondike gold strike. After mining in several areas in the Fortymile region, he settled at Long Bar in the early 20th century, possibly as early as 1910. Brost staked mining claims and built a cabin, a barn, and several root cellars at Long Bar.

The barn, now reduced to crumbling log walls, may have served as a horse barn for another local legend, John Powers. For years Powers used the Long Bar as a welcome stop on his grueling mail runs to the Fortymile's far-flung settlements. His mail run was finally taken over by airplanes in 1938.

More recent occupants also left their mark. Next to the cabin the firefighters found a memorial to a woman who drowned in 1982. The memorial's scrawled, heartfelt words, written by her companion and former Long Bar resident, brought home the loneliness of suddenly being by yourself in such a remote place.

After the last resident moved out in the 1980s and Brost's mining claims lapsed, the cabin's decline accelerated. Occasional visitors patched the roof with plastic tarps and sheeting, but it was a losing battle against decay.

A New Roof

Working on an historic log cabin was an intriguing challenge for Rusty Morton, the Alaska Fire Service carpenter who supervised the project. He quickly found himself impressed with the workmanship that had gone into the Long Bar cabin.

On the first day Morton poked and prodded at the remains of the roof. He eventually decided that there was little worth saving. The firefighters spent several days dismantling the roof and cutting trees for a new one, which followed the original design.

The crew also improved the cabin's chances of surviving a wildfire by clearing a 20-foot swath through the forest around the cabin, thinning trees, and removing flammable materials from near the

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17(b): ^{Getting} _{from} here _{to} there

Easement review proposals now pending in Ahtna Region, others to follow



David Mushovic

BLM employees try to ensure that information on 17(b) easement trailhead kiosks is current and accurate. Most kiosks have register sheets that help BLM document use of the easement.

Do you know the difference between a "regular" trail and a 17(b) easement trail? Many people don't, but these unique-to-Alaska "17(b)s" allow access to public lands and waters, even when they are surrounded by privately-owned lands. This might be a good time to read the information posted at the kiosk at the head of your favorite trail to see if it is a 17(b), as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is seeking public comment on these easements.

Under the provisions of section 17(b) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), easements could be reserved when lands were conveyed into Alaska Native village or regional corporation ownership. The majority of easements are for trails and are subject to very specific rules for use (which is another good reason to carefully read information posted at trailhead kiosks). Any use other than what is specifically stated is considered unauthorized—essentially the same as trespassing on private land. BLM is looking for ways to work with Alaska Native entities on management of easements crossing their lands, while reaching out to the public to deliver educational messages about allowable use of easements and to request information on how—or if—certain easements are being used.

An essential element in considering easement management is to determine how many easements

actually need managing. BLM is required by December 18, 2001 to terminate certain easements that are not being used for the purpose for which they were reserved. Many easements no longer lead to public land, some were reserved but never used, and some duplicate rights-of-way granted by other means. A thorough review of hundreds of easements statewide is underway, one Alaska Native corporation region at a time, beginning with Ahtna region in southcentral Alaska.

Initial review has determined that nearly all the easements in the Ahtna region remain valid. However, the BLM recently served notice of intent to terminate eleven Ahtna region easements. Comments on the proposed terminations are being accepted through August 16, 2001 (although an extension may be granted if needed and requested). Additional information is being sought to document use on eight other easements in the Ahtna region.

Joseph Hart, Land & Resource Manager for Ahtna, Inc., supports BLM's plans to develop easement management policies. "We each have seen the impacts these public access routes have in regards to resource use, both negative and positive, and how important they are to the local community," observes Hart.

—K. J. Mushovic



(above) Not all 17(b) easements are for trails. Here, a group takes advantage of the ability to camp for up to 24 hours at a one-acre site easement in order to change modes of transportation between a trail easement and an airstrip near the Klutina River.

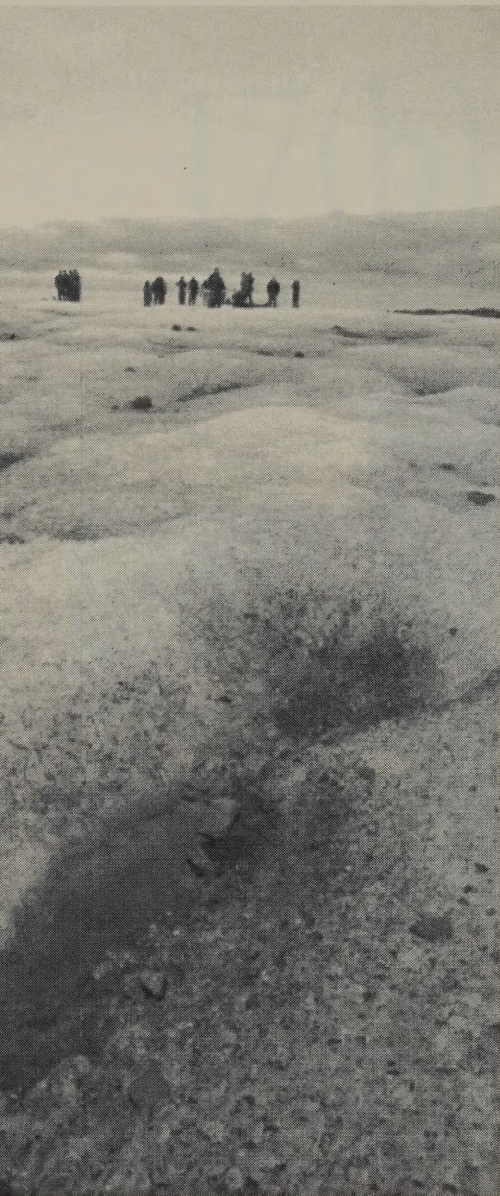


(left) Many 17(b) easement trails, like this one in the Copper Basin, are little more than cleared corridors through surrounding vegetation. Others are suitable for winter use only, being too wet for passage during the summer.

Do you want to learn more about easements in the areas you visit or in general? For detailed information on the BLM 17(b) easement review project, including the Notice of Intent to terminate certain easements in the Ahtna region, and instructions on how to provide comments, log onto the BLM easement website: http://www.ak.blm.gov/sec_17b/

Eyes in the skies help BLM

Whether it's fire or ice, "remote sensing" can provide important information



The Bering Glacier, east of Cordova, has periodically surged towards the ocean. BLM and USGS maintain an active scientific research program. Here, the Civilian Applications Committee gets a closeup view of the surface of the glacier.

Alaska's size and lack of roads are just two of many challenges making it difficult to conduct scientific research on "the last frontier." Biologists, geologists, archeologists, and other specialists who evaluate resources on Alaska's public lands must plan their fieldwork with utmost care—and have a healthy budget to get there.

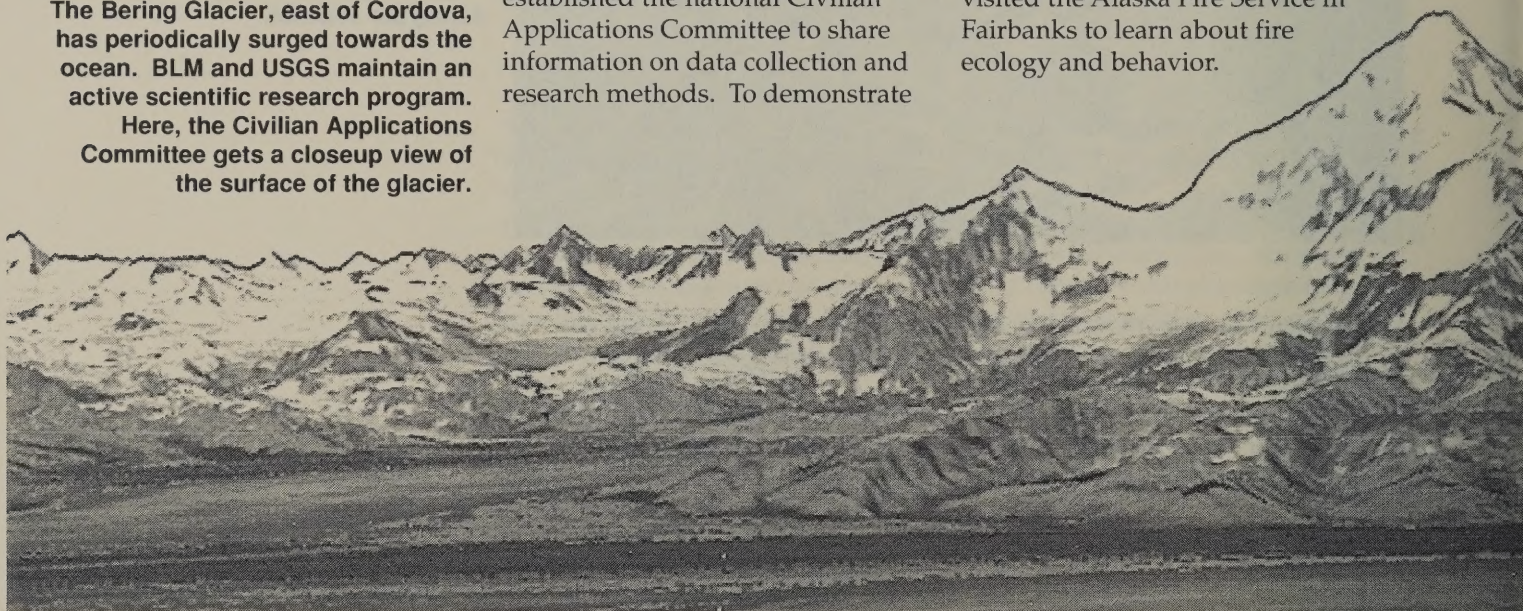
The difficulty and expense of visiting isolated locations during a short summer with unpredictable weather have led BLM to search for more economical means of obtaining scientific data. One promising area of data collection is known as remote sensing; that is, using airplanes or satellites to assist in obtaining various photographic images of wide geographic coverage. These images can be field checked, analyzed and compared to other data for a variety of research purposes.

BLM and other government agencies with similar interests have established the national Civilian Applications Committee to share information on data collection and research methods. To demonstrate

how remote sensing data is being used in Alaska, BLM hosted a field visit for committee members in June.

The first stop, the village of Nuiqsut, is the center of the recent Alpine oil field development and the jumping-off point for exploring the eastern edge of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. Here committee members saw the last remaining ice roads constructed during last winter's drilling program. They also learned how BLM will use remote sensing to monitor exploration activities and the likely development of new oil fields. BLM anticipates that the high level of detail that can be derived from remote sensing imagery will markedly improve the reliability of other data used to help meet its surface-management responsibilities such as monitoring the oil companies' compliance with lease stipulations.

From Nuiqsut, the committee visited the Alaska Fire Service in Fairbanks to learn about fire ecology and behavior.



See what to do

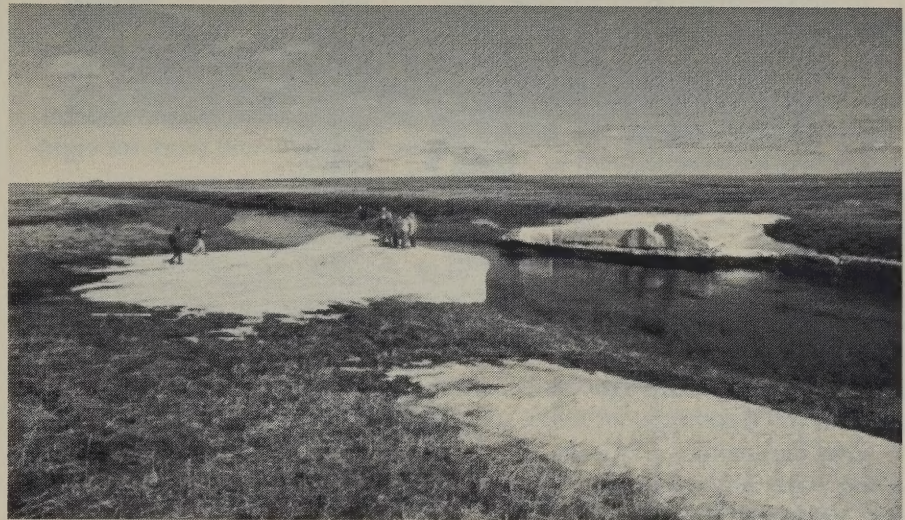
ation in the blink of an eye

BLM uses remote sensing data before, during and after fires. Each fire season, BLM monitors the color of vegetation or "greenness" weekly to prepare maps indicative of fire potential and to predict fire behavior.

While a fire burns, it is often monitored with an airplane with field observers who use infrared imagery to identify hotspots and direct firefighters to critical locations. After the fire, other imagery will aid in the rehabilitation of watersheds, wildlife and vegetation.

Finally the committee headed for the Bering Glacier, the largest glacier in North America, where BLM has been using remote sensing imagery to monitor the advances and retreats of this 140-mile-long ice flow east of Cordova. This glacier has been retreating and thinning at an alarming rate since 1996.

Meltwater collects at Berg Lake, which is periodically blocked by ice dams. The lake, now more than 20



Edward Bovy

By mid June, this patch of snow was all that remained of the ice road that led to a winter drilling operation west of Nuiqsut.

square miles in size and 600 feet deep, is filling rapidly. At some point, several million acre feet of water will be abruptly released in a massive flood. BLM is using remote sensing imagery to monitor the water levels in the lake and predict where floods will occur.

"The three destinations demonstrated the variety of ways BLM uses remote sensing to obtain the data it needs to better manage our

public lands. Without this innovative technology, there would be no economical way to obtain similar information in a timely manner," said trip leader and wildlife biologist John Payne.

—Edward Bovy

Digital elevation model of Wrangell Mountains, USGS/NMD EROS Data Center



Fuel reduction helps protect Tanacross

Northway and Nulatto next

In a cooperative effort with the BLM Alaska Fire Service, workers in Tanacross are thinning stands of black spruce that pose a threat of wildfire to the village.

The work was scheduled to begin July 30. A public meeting was held July 21 at the Tanacross Community Hall for village leaders and members of federal and state wildland fire suppression agencies to discuss the project. Tanacross is located off the Alaska Highway 10 miles northwest of Tok.

Fred Hernandez, a Smoke-jumper with the Alaska Fire Service, said participants in the project include AFS, the Village of Tanacross, the Tanana Chiefs Conference, Alaska Division of Forestry, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"The idea for the hazard fuels project came from the village. They contacted the Tanana Chiefs Conference and TCC arranged for the project with AFS," he said.

The Tanacross work involves about 52 acres of forested land. A 16-member crew was hired by the village and trained by AFS personnel during a two-day course emphasizing safe chainsaw operations. The crew will work for eight-to 10 weeks this summer and complete the project next summer.

Hernandez said black and white spruce stands will be thinned to a minimum spacing of six feet. The lower branches of remaining spruce trees will be pruned to eliminate ladder fuels. All live hardwoods will be left uncut. The project will leave a defensible space for fire suppression forces to protect the village if a wildfire occurs.

Funding was provided through the national Communities at Risk Program. It makes funds available to assist villages and communities



Lynn Emerick

Brandon Hobbs, a member of the Chena Hot Shot Crew lights grass and brush along the floodway at the Chena Lakes Flood Control Project.

in hazard fuel reduction and preparedness projects.

Planning is underway for similar projects in Northway and Nulato. The Alaska Fire Service has completed smaller fuels reduction projects in three areas on Fort Wainwright where spruce stands posed a risk to adjacent communities.

—Andy Williams



Chris Figenshau

A hot shot crew thins out spruce trees on Fort Wainwright land behind Hamilton Acres near the gate on Trainor Gate Road. Crews also cleared thickets near Badger Road. In both places, black spruce came too close to buildings and property to assure safety in case of a wildfire.

Other fires planned to improve vegetation

The flood plain at the Chena Lakes Flood Control Project provides a good training ground for Alaska wildland firefighters.

This June, fire crews burned about 60 acres of mature willow surrounded by 100 acres of grass. The purpose was to encourage growth of grasses and the resprouting of burned-over willows to improve moose browse. Monitoring plots have been established to study the effects of fire in controlling their growth.

Several other prescribed fires are in the planning stage.

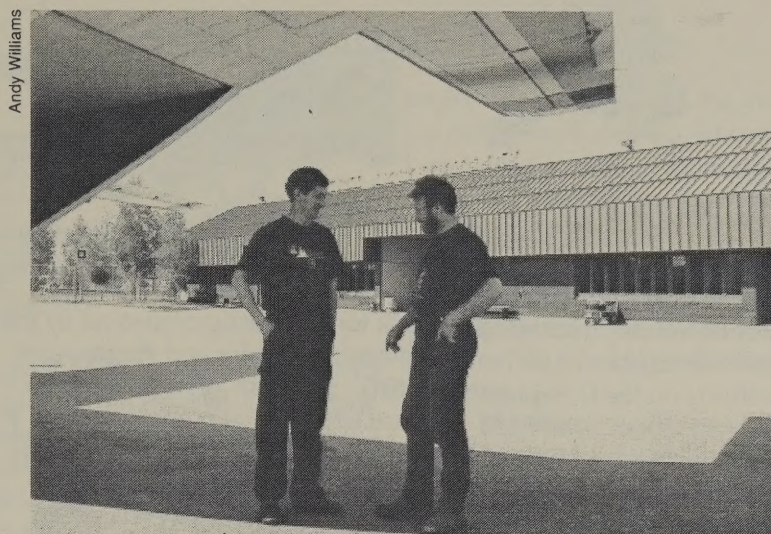
Manchu Small Arms Range: This proposed burn on 435 acres east of Eielson Air Force Base will eliminate areas of black spruce and grasses identified as hazard fuels within and adjacent to the small arms range. The fire has been planned for at least five years, awaiting the right combination of weather conditions, fuel moisture readings and crew availability.

Unit F Chena Lakes: A 180-acre parcel of black spruce is identified for burning to improve the growth of willow, hardwoods and blueberries for moose browse. Early to mid-June is the most favorable time for this burn.

Alphabet Hills: This area, about 56 miles northeast of Glennallen, is just south of a series of rock-ridged foothills and west of Pork Chop Lake. Burning would affect 28,000 to 39,200 acres. This project has just been cancelled for another year.

In all cases, fire would change predominantly late-stage black spruce forests to more diverse vegetation. Post-burn regrowth of willow, aspen and birch improve browse conditions for moose. The margins of burned, unburned, and lightly-burned areas also provide habitat for many other species.

—Andy Williams



Russian smokejumpers Andrey Eritsov (left) and Yuri Pronin worked with Alaska Smokejumpers for about three weeks this summer.

Russians and Alaskans swap firefighting tips

If someone asked you to explain the similarities of Alaska black spruce and Russian pine forests, you probably wouldn't know—unless you had talked to a few Russians recently. This summer some AFS smokejumpers got an opportunity not only to talk to but work with some of their Russian counterparts: Yuri Pronin, senior smokejumper at the West Ural Airbase in the Perm Region of the Ural Mountains in central Russia and Andrey Eritsov, a staff member of the Science and Technology Department, Aerial Forest Fire Center of Russia near Moscow.

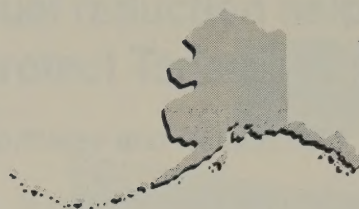
They arrived in Fairbanks May 25 and spent a week training and working with American equipment. While preparing to fight Alaska fires, they learned that the parachute systems used by BLM and Russian smokejumpers are very similar. But smokejumper activity was minimal this spring and only one of the Russians got out on a fire in Alaska.

"The basic techniques and equipment we use to jump out of airplanes and fight fires are the same, so we can both learn by studying each other," said Eritsov. Eritsov was also slated to work as an interpreter with Russian scientists on a cheat grass study in the Great Basin.

Eritsov also said Russians face conditions similar to Alaska. Pine forests burn with the same intensity as our black spruce forests in Alaska, and caribou moss, a lichen that dries quickly in the sun, grows under the trees and provides the same "20-minute fuel" as it does here, he said.

Russia has about 2,000 smokejumpers in 22 regional air bases, Eritsov said. By comparison, the U.S. Forest Service and the BLM employ fewer than 600 smokejumpers. According to AFS smokejumper Tony Pastro, the Russians worked on two fires once they transferred to Boise later in the summer.

—Andy Williams

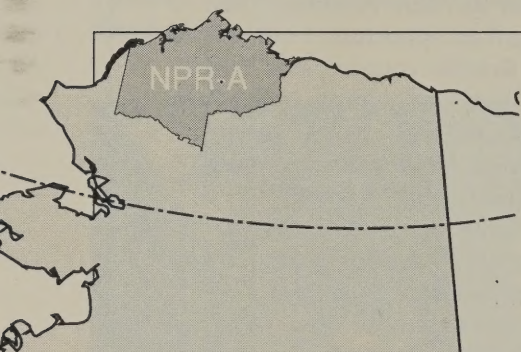


Frontier Flashes

News from around Alaska

The **Anchorage Field Office** hosted an open house July 30 to talk with local residents about fuel reduction efforts on the Campbell Tract, a 730-acre mostly wild BLM parcel located within the Municipality of Anchorage. The tract's 12 miles of trails are popular with recreationists who may have concerns about BLM's proposal to thin dead spruce and create a fuel break. BLM fire specialists explained why these techniques are necessary, given the tract's proximity to nearby subdivisions.

BLM staff attended a recent task force meeting organized by the Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility. The task force will hear from local residents at public meetings in early August before recommending a preferred route for a new waterline in Anchorage. AWWU would apply for a right-of-way grant from BLM for any portions that would cross the **Campbell Tract**. BLM would then prepare an environmental assessment to analyze impacts to the tract and how those impacts might be minimized. The public will be invited to participate in this process.



BLM completed repairs to a leaking well head discovered in early June in the **National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska**. The 355-foot-deep Simpson #32 well is located approximately 50 miles southeast of Point Barrow. A contractor installed a new master valve and other parts, stopping the leak. BLM estimates that 10 to 20 gallons of oil were released from the well which had been drilled in 1951.

BLM-Alaska State Director Fran Cherry escorted **Ann Klee**,

Chief Counsel to Secretary of the Interior **Gale Norton**, on a tour of the Alpine oilfield and the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. Klee was particularly interested in stopping at locations where exploratory wells were drilled last winter and in seeing whether the ice roads affected the land and vegetation.

BLM expects to hold a second oil and gas lease sale in the northeast corner of the **National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska** in June 2002. The agency will reoffer approximately three million acres first made available but not leased in the prior sale held in May 1999. A proposed Notice of Sale will be published in the Federal Register at least 60 days prior to the date of bid opening. That notice will also announce the availability of a Detailed Statement of Sale and where copies may be obtained.

In September, BLM expects to award the contract authorizing construction of the **new Coldfoot Interagency Visitor Center**. Work on the 6,700-foot building will begin in the spring of 2002.

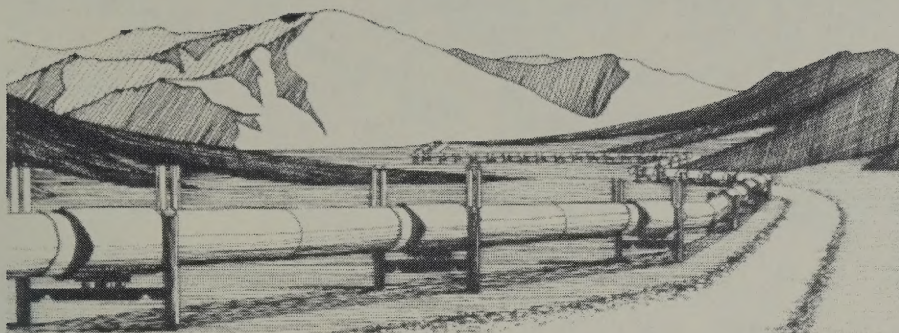
The current Coldfoot center is located in a small log cabin that opened about 15 years ago. Visitation has increased and the building is too small for the demands placed upon it.

Two other contracts will be let next year for interior exhibits and audio-visual programs so the building can open to the public in the spring of 2003.



One of the new exhibits planned for the new Coldfoot Visitor Center will include a life-sized **Dall sheep mount**. BLM hopes to secure a full hide and horns from a sheep hunter this fall. While no money can be offered, the donor will be recognized on a plaque next to the mount. Hunters willing to make such a donation should contact Rodd Moretz at 474-2202 **in advance** of their hunting trip. Moretz wants to notify all potential donors immediately upon receiving a suitable donation so as to avoid duplication of effort.

The Coldfoot Interagency Visitor Center is operated by the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



BLM selected Argonne National Laboratory as the prime contractor for the upcoming environmental impact statement for the renewal of the right-of-way for the **Trans Alaska Pipeline System**. The public is invited to provide information and comments on specific issues they feel should be addressed in the EIS. Comments will be accepted through September 29.

Public meetings are scheduled in Barrow (Sept. 12), Fairbanks (Sept. 13), Glennallen (Sept. 17), Valdez (Sept. 18), Delta Junction (Sept. 19) and Anchorage (Sept. 20). Call (907) 271-4338 for more information.

Current plans call for a draft EIS to be published in July 2002 and a final EIS in November 2002. Copies of the right-of-way renewal application are available at the Joint Pipeline Office website: <http://www.tapsrenewal.jpo.doi.gov>.

WEB WATCH....

BLM maintains hundreds of pages of information on our internet home page (www.ak.blm.gov) about public lands in Alaska. Here are some specific sites to check out...

Alaska Fire Service: www.fire.ak.blm.gov

Recreation sites to visit this summer...

Dalton Highway: aurora.ak.blm.gov/arcticinfo/travel-1.htm

Denali Highway: www.glennallen.ak.blm.gov/DenaliHwy/denali.html

Fortymile River: aurora.ak.blm.gov/fortymile/FMRiver.html

The August issue of *National Geographic* will showcase BLM-managed public lands around the United States, including many

of the new national landscape national monuments. *National Geographic* gathered so much material that the organization is now planning a major book about the public lands. It will include BLM-Alaska. A *National Geographic* photographer visited BLM lands in Alaska during July. Look for the book in the fall, 2002.

In 1992 Congress authorized the transfer of 27 acres within the former Bureau of Indian Affairs administrative site at **Bethel**, Alaska, to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Although the site lies within the boundary of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, cleanup was the joint responsibility of the BIA and U.S. Air Force. The conveyance was to be made after the site was cleaned up to applicable federal and state environmental standards. Last May the Department of the Air Force informed BLM that remediation of the 27-acre site was complete. BLM is now working with the Office of the Regional Solicitor to complete the deed which will transfer title.

Historic cabin saved

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cabin walls.

"We set it up so in the event of a fire, a small crew could come in and quickly defend the cabin," said Chena Hotshots supervisor Pat O'Brien.

Because the cabin sits right next to the Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River, O'Brien and his crew proceeded carefully with their tree-cutting.

"We didn't want to impact the riparian area, and we wanted to keep down the visual impact from the river," O'Brien said.

Once the logs were cut, the new roof went up in only about four hours. Having so many hard-working assistants at his disposal was a treat for Morton.

"Seeing this crew get so much done so quickly was definitely one of the best parts of this project," Morton said.

His only complaint was that he didn't get to watch installation of the sod roof. "In the time I took to put the front door back on, the hotshots had the whole roof done!"

As they packed up for their flight out, the hotshots tidied the cabin's interior and packed up 1,600 pounds of solid waste for removal by helicopter. Future visitors will be greeted with a sign that explains the site's history and significance.

BLM's Fortymile Manager Mary Figarelle couldn't have been more pleased with how smoothly the Long Bar project went. "It's not often the timing works out this well for a project such as Long Bar. We were really able to benefit from the Alaska Fire Service's expertise and personnel before they became busy with the fire season."

With its new roof keeping out the rain and snow, the Long Bar cabin should provide river travelers with a taste of the Fortymile's fascinating past for years to come.

—Craig McCaa

Oil spill drill tests agencies' skill

The Joint Pipeline Office and numerous state and federal agencies participated in a large-scale oil spill contingency plan exercise conducted by Alyeska Pipeline Service Company on June 27. The drill scenario involved an underground oil spill near Brown's Creek, Pipeline MP 782, heading toward the Lowe River. Responders were dispatched to the area to locate and repair the source of the simulated leak and contain the flow of oil.

The drill was part of a three-year exercise cycle, required by the Pipeline Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (C-Plan), to meet the guidelines of the National Preparedness for Response Exercise Program.

After the *Exxon Valdez* disaster, JPO participated in the development of new oil spill contingency



Betty Schorr

Oil spill responders head for a simulated leak on Brown's Creek.

plans for the pipeline and Valdez Marine Terminal and coordinated multiple agency review and approval of the plans. Exercises are now regularly conducted on the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) in different locations, with different objectives, and different scenarios to prepare responders for all kinds of situations. The TAPS C-Plans (one for the pipeline and

another for the terminal) require that spill response exercises be held and that responders and spill response equipment be available all along TAPS. Generally, only certain elements of a spill response are mobilized during each exercise to keep an exercise to a manageable scale for planners and controllers.

Alyeska and state and federal agencies jointly planned and participated in this exercise. Observers included representatives from the City of Valdez.

"Mother Nature threw us a few curves in the form of very high water and the drill responders had to contend with some very challenging conditions. This isn't necessarily a bad thing because it's a good test of the responders' abilities to improvise and hone their response skills," said Rhea DoBosh, JPO's Information Officer.

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BLM-Alaska Frontiers is published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

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